

# TOTAL LIBERTY

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## EDITORIAL

There seems little cause for optimism in this current bleak era. Accelerating climatic change threatens loss of human and wildlife habitats throughout the world, major adjustments of economies in the developed world are inevitable, but far worse effects will be felt in the 'third world' with real famine and disaster facing tens if not hundreds of millions of the poorest inhabitants of the planet. The power corrupted governments of the rich developed nations progress steadily towards a nightmarish, technologically driven society of total control and oppression. There are plans afoot to introduce bio-metric identity cards, compulsory voting, and to expand and intensify CCTV surveillance systems, all for our supposed security and safety. Meanwhile the no-less power corrupted governments of many of the developing nations oppress, rob and murder their citizens with callous impunity. Rampant murderous nationalisms and religious fundamentalism oppress and impoverish the peoples of still more nations. Many if not most people filter out the constant flow of news about disaster, oppression, murder, war and famine.

Meanwhile, politicians of all parties try ever more desperately to convince voters and subjects

that they are in control and that they matter, while ordinary people vote with their feet and refuse to take part in the electoral process, some on principle, but the majority through delusion, indifference and apathy.

And yet the brave new world of 2008 sees great perseverance and initiative among a new generation of activists, persons such as the Undercurrents media activists who have progressed from producing VHF video-cassette news programmes to DVD programmes and now to broadcasting on the internet. Marshall McLuhan may have proclaimed that the medium is the message, but in the case of Undercurrents the true importance of their work is their message and the information contained on their DVDs, website and web based broadcasts. Here at least there is some news of positive actions and projects undertaken by inspired and brave people in opposition to the global leviathan which confronts us all.

Of course this medium has come to us via the State and Global Corporate Capitalist controlled internet. However, while it is possible to do so, Undercurrents can reach tens, and even hundreds of thousands of people with the news of new initiatives, eco-villages, environmental activism and campaigns and demonstrations.

Despite all the bitter news of human inflicted death and destruction, of modern pogroms, of environmental disasters and war, we should never give up hope or despair while there are imaginative and committed groups keeping alive the flame. Not that they are alone in their work, other groups such as Radical Routes and individuals such Colin Ward have long inspired people to live outside the norms of present day society in pursuit of the anarchist vision.

Numerous small circulation and Samizdat style magazines, papers and books are constantly being produced and distributed without ISSN and ISBN numbers. Such journals as *Any Time Now*, *TCA*, *Hobnail Review*, *The Individual*, *The Match*, *Readers Digress*, *Anchorage Anarchy*, *Global Tapestry* all edited and published by visionary individuals or minute groups of people. They may appear insignificant at first glance but these new possibilities are always forming in the cracks of the dominant structures or beneath the seemingly placid surface, new ideas, new movements.

While such groups and people may re-invent the wheel and repeat previous mistakes, they also re-discover lost traditions of liberty, we desperately need more such groups, movements and freely acting people, for they are our only hope.

Total Liberty's reason for continuing to appear in these troubled times is to give one more small platform to such voices.



# Brave New Simulacrum

The loss of 25 million families' details [20th November 2007], including bank account numbers, and a fraudster's cornucopia of other information, on two computer discs; has shown up the fragility of the dataveillance dictatorship. Another aspect of this was shown in a Radio 4 interview with Professor Sir Martin Evans [31st December 2007], a Nobel Prize winner. The risk averse Health & Safety culture has led toy makers to emasculate childrens' chemistry sets, stifling the spirit of scientific inquiry, and originality. People reject things outside the usual parameters, for fear of the whole legion of jobsworthing busybodies and dataveillance kommissars jumping down on them.

The toy chemistry set could be used to make ice cream, but not gunpowder. It is not really a totalitarianism of secret police, show trials, gulags and torture. It is a totalitarianism of plastic and plenty, and the easy way. One of the most popular TV shows is *Top Gear*, where dangerous stunts are performed, often in modified ordinary cars. The presenters tried to turn their vehicles into boats, to race across the English Channel. One made it, the other two sank. In another episode, as a kind of gung ho 'V' sign to environmentalism, a dog sled raced a 4x4 to the North Pole. Famously, in one episode, Richard Hammond almost died, when he came off the runway, and crashed his rocket propelled car. This gives a clue to the popularity of the show, in that the risks taken are ridiculous, gratuitous. It is not a war film about troops under fire in Afghanistan, or the efforts of the police against the armed drugs gangs on the mean streets of Moss Side. Rather, they take risks with something normal and everyday - the motorcar.

Yet for all the security of today, with its emphasis on safety, the threat of floods caused by global warming, or liberty negating precautions against Islamic terrorist attacks, all bring new senses of threat, moral panic, the waking of fresh insecurities, the need for absolute conformism. At the last count I heard about, we had one CCTV camera for every 14 UK citizens. A curi-

ous, bland totalitarianism has set in, the comfort zone of normality is absolute. The parameters are set by Google and Wikipedia, or the Sunday Fashion Supplement equivalent of these. The syllabus and agenda are defined by the fine tuning of the search engine algorithms, the focus group, the on-line survey. This race towards conformity begins in anxiety in the Primary Schools with the SATs. Teachers have no choice but to teach according to the tests, because Ofsted and the league tables are set by these. Parents seek out the schools which perform well in the tests, and school budgets are determined by the number of pupils on the roll. UK life quality surveys and children's mental health statistics confirm the bad consequences of this approach, but who takes notice?

From the dumbing down of A Levels through to the modern university as a pseudo-educational theme park, things are watered down and rendered superficial. Hoop jumping supplants education.



There may be the semblance of revolt within carefully determined boundaries, but there is less and less elbow room. Parliamentary prohibitions against protest are used against lone protesters like Brian Haw, as much as against animal rights extremists.

Haw's protest display is now an art work, put in for a Turner Prize. We all remember that Walter Wolfgang, the man who dared to heckle Jack Straw at the Labour Conference, was detained under the terrorism act. Things narrow down, as in Orwell, where the end point is that revolt becomes unthinkable, the word is left out of the dictionary. It may sometimes be like Zamiatin's *We*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, or the technological or consumerist nightmares described by Ellul, Mumford or Herbert Marcuse. Today, it will be more like Naomi Klein's *No Logo*, the triumph of symbol over substance, a universe where the Google advertising algorithms prevail.

Never before have the dissidents been so powerless. The Left and the former anti-globalisation protesters have nowhere to turn. It is the old 'Speaker's Corner' problem - many things can be said, in the mad market place of images, but nobody is really listening. Our situation resembles the futility of trying to contact the bank to speak



with a human being, to order a new chequebook, only to be put in a telephone holding queue, a nightmare of muzak zones and PIN numbers, details which you need but haven't got. The system is geared to **prevent** the customer. Yet you know that all the codes are on a lap top computer somewhere, and stolen in Edgbaston.

Amid the consumer society sea of plenty, we have seen an end to shortages. We suffer a surfeit of material goods. Where everybody has so much, nobody can really object, nobody may really stand outside and criticise. Indeed, there is nothing left to criticise. A moral objection or a demand to be granted meaning can have no purchase here. The corrupt and cynical Post-modern politicians believe in nothing, and certainly those outside the stockade; the people on the rain soaked northern council estates, or the Third World, count for nothing. What do they care if Tewkesbury floods? Everything political is ironic - the honours for sale, the secret party donations from dodgy businessmen, the data discs lost in the post do not count. The corruption was always blatant, it never pretended to be other than a Theme Park.

From Twyford Down, the Poll Tax riots, through to the anti-Heathrow expansion climate change camp, the police and the media together know the mechanics of protest, and the methods required to neutralise it. Odysseus had to contend with the Lotos eaters, and in this regard, this is what we are faced with.. We find a world of 'virtual reality', selfishness, increasingly narcissistic pleasure seeking, looking for each novelty in the technological sophistication of their games consoles. Odysseus must dodge those crowds of drunk, laughing, shouting, skimpily clad 20-something year old women, who crowd the town centres at night. He is struggling to drag his crew away from the computer terminals, is faced with a mass of plastic facades, fairground rides, snack bars, and people in silly animal costumes.

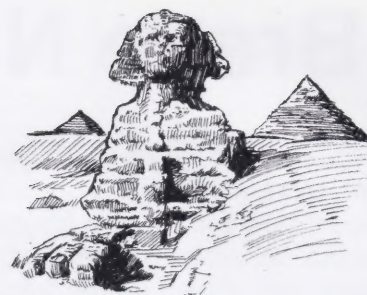
**Steve Booth**

### **Quote....unquote**

*As long as today's problems are stated in terms of mass politics and 'mass organisation' it is clear that only States and mass parties can deal with them.*

*But if the solutions that can be offered by the existing States and parties are acknowledged to be either futile or wicked, or both, then we must look not only for different 'solutions' but especially for a different way of stating the problems themselves.*

**Andrea Caffi**



## **Common Rights**

**T**hirty per-cent of the packaged food we buy at supermarkets is thrown away unopened. I heard that statistic on the radio over Christmas; it was useful to be reminded of the nature of conspicuous consumption, but not a surprise since food waste has long been enormous and growing

However, things are changing. It used to be that the economic surplus which all civilised societies generate was consumed i.e. wasted, in the weird activities of rulers and their hangers on; they built palaces and pyramids and temples, went to war, employed craftsmen to make exquisite jewellery and clothes and artists to paint and sculpt.

At least some of their toys survived and are a delight to the eye, their origin in the labour of slaves and serfs temporarily forgotten; but the quality of conspicuous consumption is in long-term decline.

The space race wasted trillions and left some beautiful photos and the non-stick frying pan; Concord provided the most expensive museum exhibit in the country. Wars are worse than they used to be though to die by a sword is not qualitatively better than dying by bomb or shell; buildings are ugly. I know that is a matter of taste, but the Lloyds building or the London Gherkin or Paris's pyramid and all those tallest buildings in the world in the Middle East, China, America are not pretty.

Today, conspicuous consumption has been democratised; we cannot rely on ruling classes and traditional parasites to eat up the productive capacity of the world. The people in their billions have to be centrally involved if universal affluence is to be satisfactorily averted.

So a third of packaged food from supermarkets is wasted; I suspect that a thorough-going statistic would reveal that about 50 per cent of all food produced is destroyed before it reaches a human stomach. Food miles eat further into the economic surplus and contribute to the waste of the energy which goes into making and using planes.



I believe that about seven per cent of Gross National Product goes on want creation, to which can be added mass entertainment, which is largely part of the same industry. Even dieting, by a curious paradox, helps eat up the surplus. The expensive promotion of moderation and its aids follows inevitably the expensive promotion of excess and one of its uglier manifestations: gross, very democratic, obesity.

The Martian would surely have been impressed at the thoughtful way city centres are lit up all night for the benefit of binge drinkers.

A type of conspicuous consumption which I had not previously noticed intruded on me recently, the crossword puzzle and sudoku. Tens of thousands of well-educated people start every day, or punctuate it, with the crossword puzzles in the heavy press. Their considerable intelligence is honed and stretched by these ingenious games. They represent a substantial slice of the surplus intelligence of modern societies which is produced at considerable cost in schools and universities and which these societies cannot put to good use. It is quite true that schools and universities themselves waste much larger quantities of the surplus in their production of students trained to pointless professions. But there is something sad and neurotic about the puzzle-lovers for whom the problems of the world which they are well-equipped to confront impinge on their consciousness only occasionally, and then as six-across or 21 down.

It is even more difficult to explain why the facts of surplus consumption i.e. waste, display, inefficiency, duplication and built-in obsolescence are so well-known and so well ignored.

We tolerate not only our own petty sillinesses but the much larger ones of the wealthy and powerful. There is a degree of huffing and puffing by the Opposition Press (whichever party is in power), at stupidities like the Millennium Dome, the Olympics, in competencies like the running of government, the cost of inquiries, wars, and trials which lead nowhere, the unearned income of various Royals and the inflated incomes of industry bosses, but that is just hot air.

Perhaps because, given the surplus which all societies produce, it actually doesn't matter much. The cost of a serious flood or a small war or a disease on the farm may well be billions of pounds but it is paid and forgotten in a year.

Toleration is OK but this toleration ensures the continuation of conspicuous consumption and of the evils it could eliminate. We live a neurotic paradox: sorry that children die of malnutrition, conscious of conspicuous waste, yet convinced that there isn't enough - of whatever - to go

round.

We are living with surplus production and surplus intelligence - surplus tolerance, which is tolerance put to the end of accepting disgraceful practices, conditions and processes that we know about and disapprove of yet disregard.

When it comes to understanding this self-destructive viper's nest, tolerance becomes white noise. The idea that there really is much more than enough of just about everything we need in the world for everyone to live pleasantly is unheard of - too stupid to be considered.

Living stupidly is a day-to-day experience and for each of us, insignificant; a bottle here, a bag of household rubbish there. The totality of our behaviour is of another magnitude; society as a whole is a gigantic oil tanker which we cannot imagine turning.

There is an analytical device known as the tragedy of the commons. This shows that if there is an unregulated good like a piece of common land or the open sea to which any and everyone has access, it will be destroyed because each individual sees only the tiny impact he (she) has on it and cannot comprehend the total impact of everyone's little nibble; moreover, they see no reason to be moderate because there is nothing to stop the next chap taking a bigger share. To protect a common inheritance, which includes fresh air, open space or general well-being, the inheritance has to be regulated for the fair benefit not of all the commoners which is just what happens with grazing land in many parts of England; the commoners association determines how many stock each landholder can put on the common and appoints an overseer to ensure that no one exceeds his allocation. It works.

The alternative of private ownership doesn't work; we know that. We are suffering its imposition. If we are to stop both conspicuous production, and conspicuous consumption, control has to shift down to the people who both produce and consume; who enjoy the benefits of their labour and make good their own mistakes and abuses. We have to take the part of the common in everything.

**Dick Frost**

*Every ideology that has sought to master and direct the State has instead become its servant. The lesson for our time, if any would see it, is that the State is not to be mastered. Like the Ruling Ring, in Tolkein's Lord of the Rings, the State allows its "wearer" to enjoy for a time the illusion of control and then assert its mastery.*

**Morgan Edwards**



# SOME CONSIDERATIONS OF THE FUTURE

Some considerations of the future offer glimpses of possible social changes and the human relationships involved, hinting at the libertarian or authoritarian Shape of Things to Come. Studying the future is a tool that can be used to advance capitalism or help anarchists develop their theory and practise. Most such non fiction studies are made to expand markets and control populations, so that only commodified views are obtained. Some

Futurologists look at trends in particular countries, trying to see if such things can be predicted, in some form, elsewhere. Objective criteria like statistics and economic developments are studied to see if X more "Coke" can be drunk in country Y or if the traffic in Stockholm today is any indication of the same problem in Tokyo next year. The pace of change is so quick, destructive and frightening that it is tempting to try

and ignore it. But offering some hope, a unique book which showcases the expectations of young people from different cultures: 'Voice - in their own words Teenagers Predict the Future' by Lisa Morgan. Reflecting its international perspective, the text is in English and Japanese. From 1998 to 2001 more than 130 teenagers took part in 7 countries. The book condenses a 3 year self-funded project which investigated what over one hundred young people expected of the future. Using subjective techniques – thoughts and feelings, examining images in "their mind's eye, it tries to show how thinking-patterns might shape the subjects' world. She uses a technique Morgan calls "visualisation" accessing intuition (close your eyes, see the future and describe it). Beautiful photos of these teenagers accompany the text.

She claims "thoughts could be affecting our lives and world", producing "climate(s) of opinion(s)". By looking at recurring images described by the teenagers we can see how their thoughts coalesce. "Environmental damage", peace and social justice are some problems raised "throughout this project" in various ways. Perhaps these young people are preparing themselves, Morgan says "for what looks like .... a fusion of technology and the organic world". Her widespread diverse sample, of

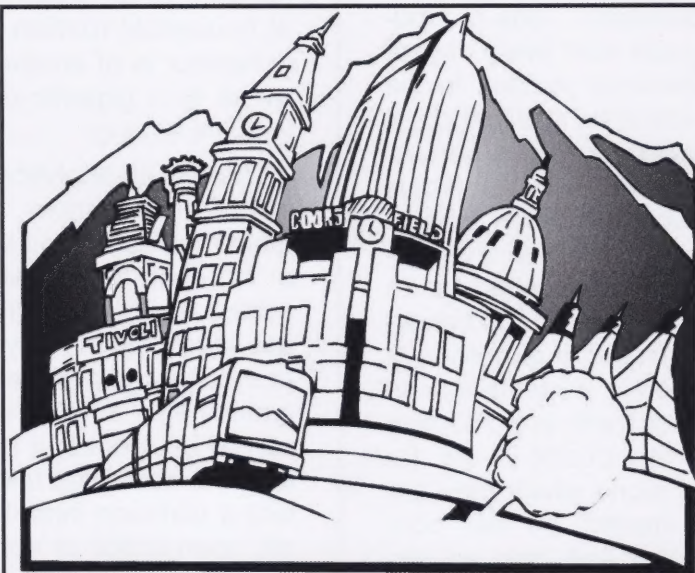
course produces contradictions; selfishness as well as idealism and altruism are expressed, sometimes by the same subjects. But some patterns are distinguishable. "I think that money should be abolished" says one teenager "so that everyone gets a fair share". Others indicate that people would be "happier" if selfishness declined. Two contributors see themselves living without borders, like true Cosmopolitans. "No matter

how, whatever we have, let's use it for the good of society" adds another. The loneliness of urban living is described, as is the desired opposite of emotional warmth. Morgan observes that "if what people think does affect outcome(s), imagination is the most powerful asset we possess to shape our world".

Most Science Fiction depicts technological change, ignoring possible evolutions in human

affairs; aliens may be robots or life-forms. Such uses of imagination are not extended to social changes. Universally, "progress" in human terms is confused with technologically based changes. Among the notable exceptions to techno-bound writing, are Isaac Asimov's Caves of Steel and his other works describing robots' conduct code towards humans. But the decades-long running TV series Dr Who offers few ideas about the future of relationships. Early bits of Star Trek with a mini-skirted Black woman astronaut, did offer some glimpses, showing relationships between colonisers and colonised. Ursula Le Guin's The Dispossessed also looked at that idea. She showed how, in a far from perfect anarchist society, choices could be far wider; with abolition of the state and the governmental, military and other hierarchies needed for its support.

Boundaries and ideas of freedom can be posed, suggesting what we might gain technologically could be lost socially. Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (pub. '32) forecasts how women's and sexual liberation could happen without changing a rigid caste and class system. Freedoms, however, we define them, can be won or lost over time as seen in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* where women are kept





down Taliban-style. Alternatively, Steve Cullen's *The Last Capitalist* and Richard Frost's *The Social Gene* (written in response to *The Selfish Gene*) offer quite optimistic insights. Philip Pullman's *Dark Materials* trilogy is a bridge between Science and Fantasy fiction, exposing the nature of power and how it can be challenged. His visions carry Blakeian ideas.

An excuse for quietism / not considering the future of relationships is the cliché "you cannot change human nature". This ignores our potential for change, responding to the environment and other forms of education. Although there are some universal constants like wanting a decent life for loved ones.

Such food for thought is essential to activists, anarchists and others to spur imagination. Hopefully, this can contribute to our thinking about strategies and tactics, as well as day to day issues. Our alternative is to confine ourselves to responding to crisis after crisis in work place and community struggles. I question Morgan's "New Age" assertion that "all we have to do is to dream it into existence". But although she is not what readers of TL call "an activist", Morgan gives us ideas to take forward. We do not have to be "one dimensional" anarchists, like those good folk who reject materialism in favour of "New Age" lifestyles but take no part in collective actions. I also wonder about those with the "class struggle" label who see no place for themselves in a future society that we could make together. Although there is no such thing as "the perfect comrade" any more than there could be a perfect society, our values, visions, thoughts, feelings and imaginings can influence others into where we want to go.

Martin S. Gilbert



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## AN ANARCHIST CREDO

- **Anarchism** is not terrorism or violence and Anarchists do not support, aid or sympathise with terrorists or so-called liberation movements.
- **Anarchism** does not mean irresponsibility, parasitism, criminality, nihilism or immoralism, but entails the highest level of ethics and personal responsibility.
- **Anarchism** does not mean hostility toward organisation. Anarchists only desire that all organisations be voluntary and that a peaceful social order will exist only when this is so.
- **Anarchists** are resolute anti-statists and do not defend either "limited states" or "welfare states".
- **Anarchists** are opposed to all coercion.
- **Poverty**, bigotry, sexism and environmental degradation cannot be successfully overcome through the State. Anarchists are therefore opposed to taxation, censorship, so-called affirmative action and government regulation.
- **Anarchists** do not need scapegoats. Poverty and environmental destruction are not ultimately caused by transnationals, IMF, the USA, the "developed world", imperialism, technology or any other devil figure, but are rooted in the power to coerce. Only the abolition of coercion will overcome these problems.
- **Anarchism** does not posit any particular economic system but only desires that the economy be non-coercive and composed of voluntary organisations.
- **Anarchists** are not utopians or sectarians, but are sympathetic to any effort to decrease statism and coercion and the replacement of authoritarian relations with voluntary ones.

Larry Gambone



# Band-aids for the Bourgeoisie: The Anarchism of Psychotherapy

**W**hat does psychotherapy have to say that is useful to Anarchism? Is a politics of psychotherapy possible? These are the two questions I want to pose and suggest some answers.

Following the disappointments of '68 I was one of many radicals who turned towards the psy industry (psychiatry, social work, psychotherapy) not only as a personal journey but as a theoretical framework for understanding the mechanics of power and the factors obstructing social and political change.

Like many others I too was a dedicated materialist. There were single causes, single class-based positions, single meanings and single explanations. But then figures such as Laing and Foucault pushed positivism away. Uncertainty and relativism was knocking on the door.

The battle as to who owns the management of mental distress has been fought over for the past 400 years. Different groups have jostled for control. Psychiatry gained its dominance by firmly attaching itself to scientific medicine. It could have easily teamed up with education, religion or novel employment schemes. And what a fascinating "what if" that would have been.

This conflict shows no signs of respite today. Currently, legislation is on the table that will require all therapists to register with the state's Health Professional Council. Moves are in process to ensure that training and practice are monitored through state-approved agencies.

It's a dog's breakfast of an idea. Eminently suited to bureaucracy but of scant regard to the quality of any therapeutic relationship. One can wave any number of certificates around but the adequacy of any therapy can only be realised in the acutely personal meeting of human beings.

As it is, many of the existing professional bodies (and there are many) are frantically selling their integrity to get their feet under the state's table. The pressure is on that registration is "inevitable" and documents laden with barely concealed threats suggest that work will be impossible unless one embraces the agency of the state.

The history of the psy industry can be seen as a series of competing ideologies of care. Such models fight hard for dominance, glow briefly, before politely fading away to be replaced by fresh contenders. Presently CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) is being oversold and offered as the new "product." It promises to plug the drain on the state's resources and get people quickly back to productive work.

The consulting room model of therapy fits in well with our individualist times. As a model it provides a way of being an individual while avoiding the ruthless competitiveness that are the hallmarks of a consumer society. The Market State is skilled in producing everything except human beings. It produces elaborate TV screens, powerful motor cars and sophisticated chemicals, but to refine or empower the human spirit never enters into the estimation of advantages.

Take the example of "stress" because much has been studied about workplace anxiety from an individual psychological perspective. Stress, I would argue, is not only an individual condition but also a collective one; more a "we" experience than an "I" experience.

The psy industry (and the Market State of which it is a part) stays close to the dominant ideology. Instead of attending to the emotional housekeeping of the workplace it prefers to scapegoat individuals. Victims are picked off to undergo the trauma of meeting targets in which intimidation and bullying become unavoidable.

And here is the pay-off for therapists who welcome into their consulting rooms the fall-out of a sick and disabling society. At worst therapists act as sticking plaster. Patching up the walking wounded enabling them to return and face the same trauma again. Encouraging people to come to terms with workplace rage can easily slip into a demand for submission and conformity.

Mental distress cannot be divorced from the social context in which it occurs. Instead of offering anger management courses we should consider encouraging stress victims to focus their feelings of resentment and injustice back onto the system that caused it.

The great tragedy of the consumer society is that there are legions of stress victims living in intimate recall with the oppression inside their heads. They spend their days alone, condemned to replay workplace events and conversations. Left alone to face the flashbacks and the alarming visceral changes, vulnerable to every minor irritant and washed over with guilt and impotence. It's a cruel scapegoat condition that shakes one to the bone, tears apart one's composure, one's place in the community and the very spirit and meaning of life.

The task for the radical therapist is to map out, with the victim, their immediate environment. With so much misery pervading their life it's important to peer into the world that surrounds them. If change is required, and change is always



a decision for the victim to make, then we must look together to see if that world can be changed.

Often we are in the grip of large and indifferent influences. Indeed it is hard to see if we have much control at all. But the very freedom to change depends on the extent we can modify these influences.

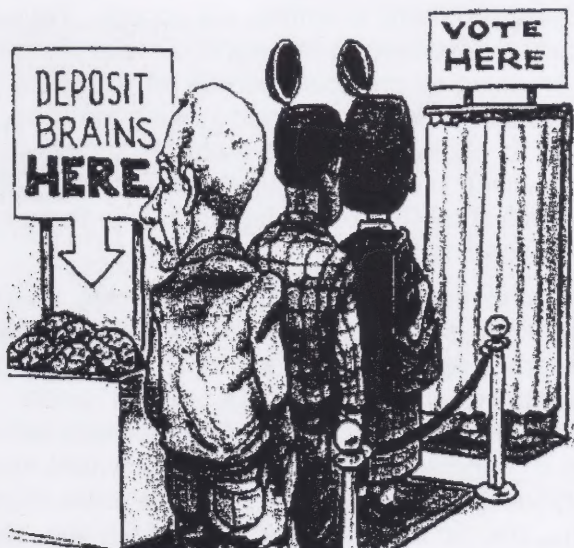
On your own you are a dead duck. Even in the depths of despair you are a social animal. Radical psychotherapy suggests that victims come together to recognise that we are not the carriers of a Market State virus. By refusing to accept internal psychological reasoning, immediate ways of altering one's environment can be explored and acted upon. Victims are to be freed from the destructive inner dialogues that are beyond the social orbit.

But our first task as therapists is as equally hard as the tasks we ask of our clients. It is too comforting for us to promote dependency on the state's monitoring hand. Too easy to accept regulation and by implication become agents of the state. In a similar way to our clients we face that courageous choice between conformity or honesty. And unless we experience this life-altering challenge we cannot hope to understand the fearful dynamics our clients live with.

There are endless theories of the human condition. Many require a lifetime of study. We must ask of them whether they assist moving people in a positive direction or do they simply further conformity? Above all we should never forget our primary task: that of being alongside our clients as comrades-in-arms. Together we work towards a society that enhances the human spirit rather than exploiting it.

**Peter Good**

( The Internet journal [elpnosis](#) leads the fight against state registration ).



## Global Warming and Social Evolution

I want to first point out that I believe that global warming involves two different aspects. The first is that it is a natural process and that, along with its opposite, global cooling, this development has occurred many times in the life of our planet. The second point is that even if warming is natural, human activity is greatly exacerbating this trend, and prudence, (a good old fashioned, but long forgotten conservative virtue) should force us to do something to abate the problem. That said, I would like to examine the relationship between global warming and human social evolution.

Millions of years ago the savannah areas of East Africa began to dry due to warming. This forced our primate ancestors to descend from the trees and become bipedal, tool-using proto-humans. These proto humans, about one and a half million years ago, left Africa and expanded into Asia. They may well have done so again because of climate change. More than 200,000 years ago, our people, Homo Sapiens developed, once again in Africa and at some point crossed over into Europe and Asia. Perhaps climate change was the push.

Then we had the long Ice Ages. After that, about 12,000 years ago, the world began to heat up. The ice melted, and vast areas of the world, most importantly the rich coastal plains, were flooded, giving rise to the universal legend of The Flood. About the same time the great prehistoric animals like the mammoth disappeared. Humans, now crammed into a smaller land mass, sought other means of food production, so horticulture, agriculture and domestication of animals progressed.

Global warming leveled off and a moist period ensued. This was ideal for the neolithic farmers



who prospered, multiplied and built large villages. These peasants continued the egalitarian practices they had inherited from their paleolithic ancestors. Such was the situation in Eastern Europe. The Sahara at this time was not a desert, but a series of large lakes or shallow inland seas which supported fishing and farming communities. Herders roamed the plains and savannahs.

Then 6000 years ago the climate warmed radically, and was to do so, in an undulating pattern, for the following 2000 years. The result was devastating for the people on the plains and the Sahara Lakes. These areas quickly became deserts and the people fled en masse to the lush valleys where they conquered the farmers. The conquering minority became the Masters, the conquered, the Serfs, and thus class society was born. In order to maintain this inequality and to extract taxes and forced labour, the Masters needed to terrorize the conquered through a permanent military force. Thus the State was born. This was a disaster for humanity. Most of the suffering that was to follow, up to and including the present; the wars, enslavements, famines and genocidal conquests, have their origins in these horrific events, the climate-induced birth of class and state.

For the next 4000 years, the climate would cycle between warmer and colder periods, but generally with more of an emphasis on the colder. Some civilizations would rise and fall with these swings of temperature and precipitation. The warming trend that enabled the Vikings to settle Greenland, destroyed the Anasazi of New Mexico and the Tiahuanacans of Bolivia. The Mini-Ice Age beginning about 1300 made the marginal lands of Europe unproductive and helped precipitate the Black Death. The world remained in cool mode until the 20th Century.

Now the cycle has shifted to the warming trend. In the meantime, over the last 200 years class division and the state have created a wasteful, unsustainable economy that greatly exacerbates the warming tendency. This authoritarian system, born from global warming, is creating the conditions to destroy itself, ironically through global warming.

What next? One means to help curtail the warming trend would be to shift to an economy that was human scale, decentralized, did not depend upon warfare – that ultimate polluter – nor on over-consumption and a lot of wasteful long-distance carriers. This would mean the break up of that class divided, hierarchical, authoritarian structure. Put simply, state and class got us into this mess, state and class have to go so we can clean up the mess. Climate change may be the quite literal "hot house" of our next stage of social evolution!

**Larry Gambone**

# The End of Cash Capitalism?

Whether us rather mentally sedate Anarchists like it or not, the world as we know it is going to have to change. No, this is not a *shock horror, is it not terrible?* article, but a serious consideration of how values, and with them currency, will be forced to change.

The force causing the change, and on a global scale, will not be politicians or revolutionaries, but carbon – specifically carbon dioxide. The global carbon facts are known. In the pre-industrial age atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> was roughly constant at around 280 parts per million. Last year, at the Mauna Observatory, 11,000 feet up in Hawaii, it was measured at 376 ppm. Over a decade the rate of increase had risen from 1.6 ppm per annum to 3 ppm, and this rate of increase is itself increasing. The numbers may seem small, but despite howling winds, lashing rain, thunder and lightning, our atmosphere is surprisingly delicate. Parts per million of such greenhouse gases as CO<sub>2</sub> can have alarming effects. For the first time since records began there were two force 5 hurricanes in southern America this year.

One of the commonest estimates of the 'tipping point', the point at which there will be no turning back, is given as 400 ppm. If we carry on as at present this will be reached somewhere between 2015 and 2020, far sooner than most politicians and many scientists will accept. Yet practically everywhere in the world climatic disruption is breaking all previous records for extremes and disasters. And it is no good looking to the recent past to explain this as a natural process. We have been putting pressure on the climate since the Industrial Revolution began, nearly three hundred years ago.

So this pressure is coming to a head. Carbon exchange systems, on stock exchange models, already exist as businesses try to meet their government's emission targets agreed under the Kyoto agreement. So carbon is already achieving a monetary value. Now we know that monetary value is (or was) related to the value of gold. The ore, or nuggets, are taken from the earth,



refined, and locked away again. The value relates to its scarcity outside its bunkers. So we are in the ludicrous situation where something you can't have, which has little inherent value in today's real world, and which has minimal practical use, is supposed to set the value of the paper we print and exchange. Oh dear. No, it's even worse. Today it is supposed to guarantee the value of numbers we exchange around the world in binary numerical form. Oh dear indeed.

Things are going to have to change from this archaic confidence trick because of the conditions outlined above. The big general problem is that we are all dependant on technology. (Technology: the use of energy to change the form and / or position of something.) It would be impossible to imagine our present way of life without it. And, ignoring the nuclear question for the present, oil is at the heart of modern technology. True, Mercedes and Honda have published details of a 'clean' diesel engine that reduces carbon emissions, and all manufacturers will try similar routes, all seeking their nirvanas of 'business as usual'. It won't work. And other routes, such as the hydrogen economy are inherently flawed.

Everything we do or use has a carbon footprint. And this is where the future of real values lies. It has already been suggested that each person should have a personal carbon ration, with another column of figures on bank accounts. So buying or using things would require two payments, one in money and one in carbon. This scheme does not say how corporate interests would be carbon funded; it is assumed it would have to rely on carbon inputs from sales. Fair enough. But what about all layers of government and other non tangible product producers, such as hospitals? There are problems to be solved with carbon currency.

But the key point is that something very real is emerging as the governing economic factor. Money and carbon are on a see-saw. As a relatively short time goes by carbon will eclipse confidence trick money. While for a short time people with excess carbon could sell it to those wanting more, what could they sell it for except for money which will become increasingly worthless on its own. The beauty of a carbon based economy, and the reason why anarchists should go for it, is that carbon cannot be saved. It only has real value if used, and it has real, vital, uses. But paradoxically it must be macro limited in all uses. Would a carbon currency market allow real values to emerge from real value?

Would a reality of wealth accumulated by money capitalism be forced to fade away by the need to use but control carbon? On the face of it,

it would seem so. It would lead to problems for those corporations and individuals who had gathered resources in the past, particularly land. But with transparent and equitable carbon rationing, such resources would have to be redistributed. The other side of beauty in carbon currency for Anarchists is that something, somebody, would have to control and administer it.

At present this would be governments, the existing state conglomerates we oppose. I'd like to break this train of thought briefly and consider China. If we accept China as inscrutably still holding its Communist theocracy, while acting capitalistically, it is in a similar but macro scenario to anarchists. The Chinese question puzzling economists today is, why is China selling things so cheaply (including its currency) to buy heaps of dollars? The conventional answer is, so that it can buy more oil and other energy to fuel its fantastic industrial growth. True, but, like most economic answers, it doesn't make sense. If this were the case, selling its products for the best price it could get would be more sensible. I believe it is playing a longer game. One where it has closed down most of western industrial capacity, and possibly burst the dollar. The result could easily be civil unrest amounting to revolution in previously stable nations. I also believe anarchists have to play the long game.

Perhaps the old Marxist belief that the state would destroy itself (wither away) could come to pass under the Chinese plan. Perhaps under carbon rationing the anarchist values of co-operation, systems of self formed social currency, and the regeneration of real communities could also happen. As far as Anarchists are concerned, the long game is the only one in town. We either prepare for change, help it happen, or sit back and wait for the great human die-back.

Most anarchist writing is either based on the history of the great four, Kropotkin, Malatesta, Proudhon, and Bakunin, possibly proceeding to the Spanish civil war of the 1930's, or it is based on a superficial reaction to current events. Whilst this, and the assimilation of anarchist social principles, is necessary for beginners, those a little further in, such as readers of *Total Liberty*, must bring their knowledge and thought to the questions of the future. Back to the armchair. Start playing head games, create mental models of future scenarios, ask 'what if' and manipulate the models to assess the results. Sketch your thoughts on paper in words or diagrams. When you think you've got a reasonable proposition write it out. Circulate it so we can all benefit from your thoughts of future possibilities.

**Colin Johnson**



# Ourselves Alone?

**A**narchism and Nationalism are not usually regarded as comfortable bedfellows, indeed each issue of TL features Larry Gambone's Anarchist Credo, which states unequivocally that '*Anarchists do not support, aid or sympathise with terrorists or so-called liberation movements*'. Indeed for one would not work with any movements which were racist, fascist, imperialistic or likely to lead to murderous national rivalries as seen in the Balkans following the break up of Yugoslavia.

However, having said that there are some elements of some nationalist movements, such as that in Wales, that not only have included an emphasis on devolution of power, and on the empowerment of communities and individuals, but which have also historically been influenced by Syndicalism, Anarchism, Green ideas and decentralism. In the case of Wales this is not just a phenomena of the past. A number of Welsh opposition figures have some genuine knowledge of Anarchists, Anarchist history and ideas. Some few years ago, while attending a conference of the movement Cynefin Y Werin, a left / green movement including Socialist and Church groups in Wales, I was intrigued to hear Angharad Tomos, a long time and well known member of Cymdeithas Yr Iaith (the Welsh Language Society) announcing a workshop on her experience of direct action in support of the Welsh language cause, and of how she had campaigned with various groups including Anarchists in pursuit of their aims. How many left politicians in England either from a Trade Union or other Socialist background at either local or national level would announce such connections with Anarchists on the stage of a political conference?

Plaid Cymru, (The main nationalist Party of Wales) which is now firmly embroiled in the exercise of both local and national power, has a history which includes influence from Anarchist and Syndicalist figures in its formative years, Leopold Kohr, much quoted by Colin Ward in *Anarchy in Action* had considerable influence, and many of his works have been republished by *Y Lolfa*, one of the several Welsh Language presses that arose from the 1960's language campaigns, in both English and Welsh.

The result of such influences is still reflected to some extent in many of its members' support for campaigns such as the recent protests against the wars in Iraq, for the preservation of communities and for individual freedom.

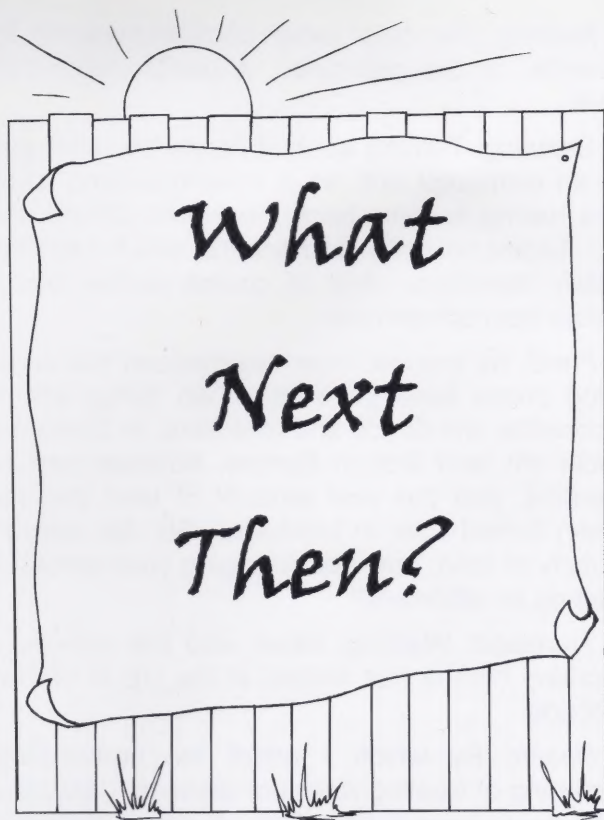
However, increasingly, Plaid Cymru is little different from any other party in its aims, and exercise of power, nor is it immune from the corrupting

influences that inevitably come when political groups control institutions with access to power and money. Like all political parties it is ultimately reliant on the powers of the state to achieve its aims and policies, but at least some of its prominent members have in their youth used direct action and non-constitutional methods in pursuit of their aim of equality of status to their language and their community and many have been imprisoned as a result. Perhaps this may at least give them a more balanced and well informed view of the true nature of the British establishment and its State, and Police, Court and prison systems. At last year's National Eisteddfod, Dafydd Iwan, the deputy leader of Plaid Cymru, in a packed concert venue with 3,500 people present performed one of his own songs, a song which implored the audience to remember and support those imprisoned in Britain as a result of campaigning for the Welsh language and others oppressed in the cause of freedom across the globe, an experience with which he is familiar having been imprisoned more than once himself.

The ultimate political aim of many of the Welsh nationalists, namely independence for their land, may appear just as unreachable as any expressed by Anarchists when they call for the end of Capitalism and the State. Neither Welsh Nationalists nor Anarchists are likely to achieve their aims in the short, medium or even long term, but the ideals and actions of movements committed to freedom and protecting the existence and rights of small communities can make a contribution to opposing the dire effects of war, global corporate capitalism and the State. Perhaps we should be more open to co-operating with other groups and movements when some of their aims are also part of our own agenda. However, Anarchists seem to have enough problems even co-operating with each other, let alone co-operating with other movements, but do we really wish to be a literal reflection the old Irish nationalist slogan, *Ourselves Alone*, in our actions? Or are we prepared to engage with other movements, philosophies and ideas? Especially when there is some shared objective or common ground? Are we prepared to engage with others in order to take a visible and active part as Anarchists in the communities in which we live? Do we wish to reject the approaches of such as Angharad Tomos when they are willing to work with us and ask our support?

Jonathan Simcock





**W**hen James Lovelock, founder of the Gaia hypothesis beloved of all greens, recommended nuclear energy in his latest book *The Revenge of Gaia*, those same greens howled Heretic! at him. I don't want to dwell on why he did, nor why they did. Rather I want to explore the positive thought and actions which Anarchists should, or must, adopt facing a future in today's world.

First let's deal with an old chestnut. It is the anarchist axiom that 'my freedom ends where yours begins.' We don't really believe that in any absolute sense. What we really mean is 'my freedom ends where yours begins as long as I agree with you.' Or at best 'as long as you do or believe nothing which would restrict my freedom – or the theoretical freedom of others.' Hence the long running waste of time amongst those, usually younger, anarchists who oppose Trots, Marxists, and too many other *-ists* to list here. Why is this a waste of time? It is not about the refinement of anarchist theory or practice within anarchism, rather it is reliance on the safety of a battered old historical fort to shout at others in similar redoubts. Ego grooming perhaps, of little real use.

We should ignore those who have already chosen a position, no matter how wrong we think or feel they may be. They should be irrelevant to what we are trying to do. Yes, we are trying to create more anarchists, but we would better achieve that by the rational example of what we do, while explaining why we do or believe it, to

anyone who is interested. A non-violent evolution of the old 'action by deed' ascribed to by early bomb throwers. But to do this we have to be sure of what we believe. Take the example above in its simplest form. Can we really say one freedom ends where another begins? I think not, if only for the reason that it assumes no growth or change on either side of the equation. To be philosophically sound what we can say is 'my freedom extends as far as ethically and practically possible, so long as it allows yours to extend in the same way'.

Of course there are endless grounds for discussion and perhaps action within this paradigm. If someone were bent on acts of arson, rape, or pillage, you may consider it your duty to physically prevent them. Such scenarios are thankfully few and far between. But what about acts that we all indulge in on a day-to-day basis? Like it or not (most of us not, I believe) we can't avoid it as long as we are part of the global systems that prompted Lovelock to write his book. For anarchists the only answer is to move outside the system. We have many of the answers, we just have to apply them – to ourselves.

In their classic *Communitas*, Paul and Percival Goodman examined the possible way that we could fulfil the needs of life in a civilised society. These are housing, clothing, food, transport and health. Most of us have to join the system to meet these needs, and there is no denying the necessity of this at times. Even if we salve our conscience by seeking lowly or alternative work, we still become part of the system.

But the system itself is bound to change in the not so distant future. And one question nobody will be able to avoid, even if you have not already considered it, is this: What do we do when the oil gets in short supply? The system, America in the lead, think that power and wealth should lead the way to a different world. But we are all dependant – everything we do has a carbon footprint and most of that comes from oil. So is there an anarchist answer to that particular problem? I don't think there is, but as anarchists we should be saying something as long as we have a toe in the system. Something about equality and co-operation perhaps. But having thought about it long and hard (and here I join the heretics!) I think the only answer to all the problems oil brings is carbon rationing. And how would such a rationing be implemented, and by whom?

OK, back to the system itself and the needs of a civilised way of life. The needs of the latter require that, whatever your past or future 'business as usual' plans, you become as independent in as many areas of need as you can. No one is



ever likely to become completely independent, but that is where trading and skills exchange outside the system come in. I had better say something that I have experienced recently and is relevant to this theme: people today don't seem to like getting their hands dirty. Apparently that is something which 'others' do. Well, if not now, soon we will all be others. So adjust your mindset! LETS schemes exist in many areas, if not in yours, why not start one? It is one route into fulfilling some of your life-needs.

Whatever fills your life now, I should advise you to follow your intuition and inclination in some of the areas sketched out below, you never know what you may like until you try it – even if you get dirt on your hands. I suggest some research under the headings of the following common sense needs (all valuable in themselves).

**Housing:** If you are not caught in a mortgage trap, why not start with the things that either annoy you most or that you have to get other people to do. Remember skilled people will be in short supply. If you are in the mortgage trap, what about starting a housing co-op or association?

**Woodwork:** There are usually many course which teach the basics of using tools and making joints. These are the keys to a vast area of possibilities. You could go on to wood turning, which will teach you about turning and more tools.

**Glazing:** Cutting glass and mending windows. Easy with a little practise.

**Electrics:** Just get the right power going down the right line. Many books are available on household electrics.

**Plumbing:** Bends and joints, then you've got it. And it leads you into metal work – itself a fascinating subject. In this you could learn how to make your own tools, and with a suitable lathe you are on your way to independence.

**Clothing:** The age of plenty is an oil based illusion: make do and mend will come back. I must admit I know nothing of these things, but it seem these are the important ones. First, an observation. You can get many Archery books about making bows, the history of and the various types of bows. But none that I have found tell you how to make arrows, or more importantly how to make bow strings. Similar in textiles. How do you make threads?

**Sewing:** Stitching simple things like buttons and zips (re-cycled). We are lucky enough to have inherited my mother's hand-driven Singer – but where does the thread come from? Mending (and making) useful clothing is a thing many have mastered.

**Knitting:** The older ladies clicking away by the fireside, or the guillotine. A useful and artistic skill.

**Spinning:** Turning washed fleece into wool yarn is an elemental skill, as is weaving: Hand looms are having a come-back. Footwear: Shoes, that is. Leads you into leatherwork, which itself has many branches. And of course leather has to come from somewhere.

**Food:** As you will have experienced this winter food prices have gone up. Two things are responsible, the floods and fires here, in China and India etc, and fires in Europe, Australia and Argentina, and the vast amount of land that has been turned over to bio-fuels. So for our own supply of food, how about digging your garden or getting an allotment?

**Transport:** Walking, bikes, and the number of working horses has trebled in the US in the last decade.

**Health:** By which I adopt the conventional meaning of treating illness or disease. Medicine and drugs have captured us all, and it cannot be denied that many of us (me included) owe our lives to them. But there is still much that can be done, should we need it, outside these systems. Much wisdom of herbs and natural remedies lies forgotten in dusty tomes.

For all the above and much more we still have access to libraries and other sources of knowledge. It is knowledge that could make you free, or freer. Recycle and simplify (as H. Ford put it) yourself – become your own person. Ride the system rather than carry it.

Colin Johnson



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# Anarchist tales from the canal bank

**A**narchists they are not, but the unspoken reciprocal agreement among most barge dwellers is evident. Take Tim for instance who makes a modest living busking on the streets of Stafford and Rugely. His familiar figure with various colours of dreadlocks, is well known to the locals. He has been on the canals ten years now.

Basic skills such as carpentry, mechanical welding are at a premium, and one enterprising person with an old boat uses it as a 'pump out', that is to pump raw sewage from your boat. The price £1 for a porter-potty and £13 for a full pump out of the tank. She is not rich as these skills are not generally sold, merely exchanged.

As I have no marketable skills any repairs that are needed to my boat have to be paid for. The old tub that is my home has broken down so many times that it has left me bankrupt. At the moment I am immobile.

Working voluntarily for animal sanctuaries we collect greens and other vegetables that retail proprietors cannot sell due to a blemish or other such fault. This food keeps the animals and ourselves in good health. We recycle everything we can.

A friend of mine that once lived here on the Anglo-Welsh mooring is a furniture dealer. If there is a death in your family he will make you an offer to buy their effects, an antique piece of furniture in return for some mechanical work and so it goes on.

Some time ago in a piece on allotments published in T.L., I mentioned the reciprocal approach to self-help. Things are similar here among certain, but not all of the narrow boat dwellers. Time is not such a tyrant here as in the worker - consumer society, and a canal boat can only travel at 4 miles per hour or less.

Sometimes an old work barge passes selling anthracite coal at £7 or more for a bag. Very rarely do we buy this product but rather harvest the trees that have been killed by Dutch Elm Disease. Some among us have chain-saws, but my choice is the bow saw. This is what muscles are for. If we don't use them we lose them. Observe the physically unfit among the youth of today.

The view from my window is more interesting that the television screen, I reckon. Birds and other natural inhabitants of the countryside hold me in thrall. Here at my mooring, illegal at that, one must add, there is much to wonder at.

The amount of people at the week-ends can be quite enormous. How many Anarchists pass my way? None probably, this is indeed redneck country, but after writing that, it also has to be said that I have conversed with a few liberal minded people on the tow-path. This can be a refreshing comparison to the usual stuff about the country going to the dogs. But as I cannot presently move my boat on to other districts it is wise to hold council rather than express any radical alternative to the conservative elements while I remain a sitting duck indeed!

**Mick Cropper**



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# LETTERS

Dear Editor

Thank you for sending me Total Liberty. It is always a great read and with so many different anarchist voices, and those voices are not yelling at me from the pages, they are friendly and are intellectual. Makes me think of a friend who was explaining why he didn't like punk music—"I get yelled at enough already." So I don't need my fellow anarchists yelling at me either.

I've been twice to the anarchist Bookfair in London. The first time I was so happy finally being among other anarchists, chatting with people, taking part in discussions, and of course checking out the books. As the day went on I was wondering why most of those attending were not taking part in discussing where the anarchist movement was heading and what would be the best strategy to get our ideas around. There was almost no local anarchists in some of the meetings. Only us travelling anarchists. That felt strange seeing all the others at the bar chatting with friends.

The following year I came again and my heart sank a bit when I realised that in the groups the discussion was still about where the anarchist movement was heading and what would be the best strategy to get our ideas around. I haven't been there since. I would like to get all the books but British Currency is quite expensive so I buy my books from elsewhere.

But the thing is, that I will not be getting anywhere with being pissed off about what other anarchists are doing. I am as much an anarchist movement as any other anarchist. So I keep on translating and publishing, importing and distributing, talking and writing and I know that I am not alone. I know now that my world views are not upside down, it really is civilisation which is upside down.

I recently met with a German anarchist who was travelling the world, talking to other anarchists along the way, forming contacts for an international network of non-dogmatic anarchists. It is a weird psychological thing that "free-thinkers" also get stuck in fundamentalism. How can you categorize yourself and at the same time be an anarchist and yearn for freedom? At least me and the German guy heartily agreed on the vastness of the freedom within anarchist thought.

Best wishes from Iceland

Siggi

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